

*I ran right back to my boys. I gathered them round me and began to shout in a loud voice: "Great news, my sons! We have got a place for our Oratory, a more reliable one than we have had until now. We shall have a church, a sacristy, classrooms and a place to play. On Sunday, next Sunday, we shall go to our new Oratory, which is over there in Pinardi's house". And I pointed the place out to them. (M.O. p.257)*

### THIRD PART

#### TOWARDS THE FUTURE

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## CHAPTER 1

### AREAS OF COMMITMENT

#### *INTRODUCTION*

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The GC24 offers to the SDBs new perspectives for living the mission at the present day. It wants to give rise to deep convictions and foster new styles of procedure. To this end it believes that it is its duty to tread the signs of the times in the present strategies of evangelization and education.

After considering the social and cultural reality of a world which is becoming ever more secularized and smitten by multiple forms of youthful poverty, the conciliar theology of communion and of common responsibility in the mission of the Church, the growth in esteem for the spirit of Don Bosco, and the commitment by an ever growing number of lay people to live it in the world, the GC24 intends:

- to fix attention on the new relationship between SDBs and laity, and hence on the consequent demand for a change in mentality and style of life, in a common process of holiness and commitment;
- to oblige local and provincial communities to realize this new relationship in interacting with various groups of lay people, especially with the members of the Salesian Family, of which the SDBs are and must feel themselves to be an integral part (cf. C 5);
- to indicate Provincials and Rectors as primarily responsible for this task in their own communities;
- to render participants in this project the other members of the Salesian Family, especially the FMAs and Cooperators, urging them to share the common charismatic responsibility;
- to give priority to the CEP as a setting for life and activity, convoking it and giving it a structure within a shared PEPS;
- to promote the Salesian Movement, in which are involved youngsters (SYM), their animators, volunteers, families, collaborators and friends of Don Bosco;
- to indicate the coming six years as the time for giving effect to the operative decisions here set out, entrusting to the provinces the task of studying how they can be applied in the various local situations;
- to provoke and coordinate exchanges of ideas and experiences at local, provincial and world level.

In practice the new rapport between SDBs and laity will be realized through processes and strategies which are interdependent:

- Convinced and sincere INVOLVEMENT by both SDBs and Lay people,
  - which matures into concrete and effective SHARED RESPONSIBILITY,
  - with the necessary reciprocal and transparent COMMUNICATION,
- qualified by an adequate FORMATION of a mutual and complementary nature.

#### **1. Broadening the involvement**

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From the beginning of his apostolic activity, Don Bosco incorporated in his mission many lay people in so close an involvement that he had in mind a Congregation of religious with vows and a common life (Salesians) and of lay people (extern Salesians) linked to the same mission of service to the young according to their possibilities.

Today the involvement of the laity in the educative and pastoral mission of Don Bosco is a well known fact, even if in most cases it is a matter of a presence which is prevalently professional or fortuitous and which should mature into a conscious option. There is an urgent need to broaden and qualify the involvement of lay people who are willing to become part of this vast movement of persons working for the salvation of the young, inside and outside salesian structures, in the Church and civil institutions (C 5).

## **1.1 Objective**

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**To pass from a simple acceptance of the laity to an effective exploitation of their particular contribution in education and pastoral work.**

## **1.2 Guidelines**

[109]

### **Responsibility in involvement**

The commitment to broaden the involvement is of all those who, in fact, at different levels and under various headings are already sharing the spirit and mission of Don Bosco. An entirely special responsibility attaches to the SDBs, because of their identity and the task given them by the Founder of being animators of the Movement which from him took its origins.

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### **Communal witness**

The will of the SDB community for openness and involvement is expressed in the first place through the communal witness of salesian spirituality and the ability to welcome, follow up, and see to the formation of all who intend to live Don Bosco's spirit and mission.

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### **Towards greater sharing**

Particular attention must be given to lay collaborators, to members of the Salesian Family and especially the Cooperators, to those belonging to the Salesian Movement, and to the parents of the youngsters and their families. The sharing of educative ideals should be fostered through direct experience of responsibility in the CEP and through organic plans for ongoing formation.

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### **The youngsters**

In addition to being those to whom our work is directed, young people are active subjects and protagonists in the measure in which they grow in the sharing of our mission. Nowadays new fields of involvement are being opened to them, such as the animation of youth groups and the volunteer movement.

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### **Lay people of other religions and non-believers**

Lay persons too of other religions, those practising no religion, and non-believers all deserve our attention. Starting from their availability for involvement, they are called to grow in a valid, albeit only partial, sharing of our educative and social objectives. This sharing should be fostered also with all those who work for the benefit of youth.

[114]

Attention to the forms of communication

Of considerable importance for involvement is the careful presentation of the image of the mission to public opinion and the spreading of its motives and values, not only by means of adequate information but especially by practical and meaningful ways of being present in the locality.

## **1.3 Practical commitments**

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### **At local level**

The local community should foresee a *programme of involvement with fixed means and deadlines for its actuation, adapted to different situations and persons:*

- a. together with the laity it should promote a knowledge of the characteristic traits of the salesian spirit and the typical elements of the lay state, through study, discussion and practical experience of sharing in significant moments of life in common: days of formation, fraternal gatherings, shared meals, festivities and celebrations, moments of prayer and of reciprocal exchange of views;
- b. exploit the indispensable contribution of parents and families of the youngsters in a continual and effective manner, fostering the setting up of committees and associations which can guarantee and enrich the educative mission of Don Bosco by their participation;
- c. promote the significance of the work in the local Church and neighbourhood, through adequate means of information, with experiences of occasional or systematic participation with other persons and groups who share with us the commitment to the formation of the young, and especially those who are poor.

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### **At provincial level**

The Provincial with his Council should:

- a. stimulate a knowledge of and contact with lay people who live and work with Don Bosco's spirit outside our structures;
- b. programme with them some times for exchange of ideas, encouraging their commitment of service in favour of the young;
- c. study, in association with the relative organisms of the FMA and the Cooperators, the possibilities and means most likely to favour the involvement of the laity in the common mission.

## **2. Promote the sharing of responsibility**

[117]

The full and responsible involvement of the laity in the mission of the Church and the Congregation brings about growth in shared responsibility. This means respecting those tasks which correspond to the lay vocation, and helping each one to feel committed in educative and pastoral work.

It is not sufficient that there be facts or situations in which lay people are involved, but there is need for a conscious acceptance on the part of the SDBs of the necessity of promoting shared responsibility. It is a question of creating or intensifying a new rapport between SDBs and laity, respectful of the identity and functions proper to each without confusion of roles.

Shared responsibility, expressed in dialogue, in team work, in the organization of structures and adequate organisms and in the search for financial resources, should be promoted at every level. It is manifested especially in the CEP and in organisms of government and animation.

### **2.1 Objective**

[118]

**To promote experiences, attitudes, practical processes and structures of shared responsibility which foster communion and sharing in the spirit and mission of Don Bosco.**

### **2.2 Guidelines**

[119]

#### **The CEP and the PEPS**

The proper and efficacious setting for the exercise of shared responsibility of the laity in the same mission that goes back to Don Bosco is the CEP, in which SDBs and laity have an experience of communion and sharing as they draw up, actuate and verify the PEPS

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#### **Process of active participation**

The exercise of shared responsibility is a process of the whole of the CEP, which puts at its centre young people and their needs. All its components engage in the process of discernment, playing an active part in seeking solutions from the standpoint of the educative and pastoral project.

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#### **Leading points**

For this purpose it is indispensable to promote:

- a. a serene and progressive dialogue on the content and motivations of the educative and pastoral work, encouraging moments of fellowship between SDBs and laity;
- b. work in groups, to plan objectives, times and practical methods of communication and discussion, including also the financial report and the budget for the following period;
- c. the necessary integration between the demands of the educative and pastoral activity and those of family, social and political life, especially of the laity, using in the best way all the forms of collegial management already prescribed by the institutions or by law;
- d. the clear attribution of roles and functions between SDBs and laity, according to the time available, the different vocations, professional competence and levels of spiritual maturity, with particular attention to the younger members of the laity and to the members of the Salesian Family (cf. AGC 350, p.54).

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#### **The volunteer movement**

A significant form of shared responsibility with lay people, and especially the younger ones, is the volunteer movement. Educative service carried out full-time for a defined period, while inserted in an SDB community or a community of volunteers, in one's own province of origin, some other province or on the missions, represents a very meaningful experience for lay persons who are sharing in Don Bosco's project.

### **2.3 Practical commitments**

#### **At local level**

[123]

*The SDB community should:*

- a. exploit, as instruments for formation to shared responsibility, the internal structures of the SDB community: the community council, community day, and assembly of the confreres;
- b. consolidate the CEP: make sure that all its members play an active part in the elaboration, actuation and evaluation of the PEPS; guarantee the proper functioning of the collegial organs of participation (councils, teams for guidance and coordination, administrative and economic organisms); see to it that the laity participate in decision-making (pedagogical and pastoral perspectives, new mission fields, financial implications, constructions and restructuring); foster, according to the circumstances, the assuming of directive responsibility by competent lay people;
- c. promote openness to educative and pastoral initiatives started up by lay groups of the Salesian Family and, as far as possible, give them the necessary help.

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As regards the volunteer movement, the local community should:

- be open to encouraging those who ask to have an experience of the volunteer movement either at home or overseas;
- follow up the volunteers who provide service in our work, attending to their formation, helping them to share in the life of the community, and guiding them in the practice of educative responsibility;

For those who return after service abroad:

- help them to acquire a proper psychological and affective balance through fraternal welcome into the family, ecclesial and social environments;
- keep in mind the financial aspect, helping them to get back into the world of work, and giving priority if possible to commitments in harmony with their life choice.

To all volunteers:

- offer the vocational possibility of concrete adherence to one of the groups of the Salesian Family (SDB, Cooperators, FMA, DBV, DBS, etc.).

#### **At provincial level**

[125]

The Provincial with his Council should:

- arrange meetings and encounters with Salesians and laity responsible for the various sectors of activity, to programme and evaluate together the process of educative and pastoral action;
- set up the general framework of norms and criteria for the smooth functioning of activities, relationships between SDBs and laity, and initiatives promoted by them;
- study, and if necessary promote, the realization of projects together with groups of the Salesian Family or other lay groups. For this purpose they should foster the constitution and efficient functioning of the local council of the Salesian Family, in which will be studied together the needs of young people of the area, and common projects will be drawn up;
- try out, where possible and convenient, different forms of management, e.g. entrusting some salesian works to lay administration, always in a manner which safeguards their salesian significance.

[126]

With regard to the volunteer movement, they should:

- help confreres and communities to recognize its importance for the salesian mission;
- draw up and give effect to a provincial plan which, in line with the guidelines of the document "The Salesian Volunteer Movement", will include detailed proposals for insertion in the educative and pastoral project, for the preparation of volunteers, for following them up during their period of service, and for welcoming them and using their experience on their return;
- keep in mind the problems following the ending of their service, and in particular the return home of those who have been working abroad;
- foster periodic meetings between them and other young persons or adults, for spreading the culture of the volunteer movement;
- help them to make a critical assessment of their experience, and replan their life in the light of the new elements they find in themselves and in the new environment which welcomes them;
- promote contacts with the communities in which the volunteers have given their service, so as to ensure the continuity of the experience.

### **At world level**

[127]

*The Rector Major with his Council will:*

- a. promote the sound functioning of world organisms of animation and coordination between the different groups of the Salesian Family for the purpose of sharing responsibility, keeping always in mind their autonomy and the common mission;
- b. verify, with the other members of the Family, whether it be opportune to set up a world consulting body for the Family;
- c. make known initiatives and experiences of collaboration between Salesians and laity.

### **3. Exploit communication**

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The broadening of involvement and the promoting of shared responsibility demand a capacity and exploitation of communication, both in SDB communities and in the relationships between SDBs and laity; there is a great desire and expectation for the activation of relationships capable of involving the life and experience of individuals, groups and communities.

Exploiting communication means that we have to be aware of the new cultural situation in which we find ourselves; we are witnessing, in fact, a massive invasion of means and messages which create mentalities and condition behaviour. Communication is indispensable for the mission, and in the salesian style it calls for presence and apostolic dedication in the educators, the obligation to develop vital relationships with persons and groups who share with us the educative and pastoral mission of Don Bosco.

#### **3.1 Objective**

[129]

**To exploit communication in all its forms and expressions: communication at interpersonal and group level, the production of messages, critical and educative use of the means of social communication.**

#### **3.2 Guidelines**

[130]

##### **Communication: interpersonal and between groups**

Attention to the quality and growth of communication, within and outside salesian communities, develops attitudes and the ability to listen, openness, flexibility and empathy for staying with the young as educators and communicators of the faith. Communication within the CEP, the Salesian Family and with other groups becomes an efficacious opportunity for maturing together in the capacity for rapport and sharing, so as to live the values of the preventive system.

[131]

### **Evangelizing and educating means communicating**

Of its nature the Christian faith is communicative: it means listening and responding to the Word, through the mediation of human language. The inculturation of the Gospel and the evangelization of cultures require an effort to enter into communication with the values of time and place.

Education of its nature implies relationship and communication. The preventive system, with its appeal to the intelligence, the heart, and the desire for God present in every young person, presupposes a capacity for listening, for dialogue and for respect for the young. The active and animating presence (*assistance*) of the SDBs and lay educators in the midst of the young is an excellent form of educative and evangelizing communication which the youngsters themselves are waiting for.

[132]

### **Communication, production of messages and educative use of the means of social communication**

To become communicators one must attend to two aspects: the maturing of adequate cultural and spiritual attitudes, and the acquiring of critical and technical capacities which make possible an efficacious communication.

In this sector lay people can carry out a specific task. They, in fact, can single out and elaborate messages which better respond to the new culture and to the present needs of youth and of people in general. Often their language is better suited to the ordinary situations of life. In particular, those among them who have a specific professional ability can become valuable collaborators of Don Bosco's mission.

## **3.3 Practical commitments**

### **At local level**

[133]

*The SDB community must:*

- foster the communication and sharing of the educative and pastoral experiences of the confreres;
- programme moments of formation of SDBs and laity to interpersonal, communal and social communication, and to the languages of youth;
- live the community day and other encounters as occasions for the concrete practice of growth in interpersonal communication.

[134]

*The CEP should:*

- cultivate a style of interpersonal communication which is more open and ample, making use of the languages and positive messages of modern culture carried by the mass-media. This requires a physical, affective and cultural presence there where the laity and young people live, through the rediscovery of the significance and practice of salesian assistance;
- use the means of information which already exist (Salesian Bulletin, ANS, Provincial Newsletter, etc.) and others which may be possible, as instruments fostering communion and sharing between SDBs and laity.

[135]

For the purpose of promoting greater knowledge and communication between the Groups of the Salesian Family, the Rector and those responsible should:

- sensitize the SDB community to the significance and value of the Salesian Family;
- promote meetings in common for all the Groups;
- encourage initiatives which express the unity of the Family in the local Church and area.

[136]

At provincial level

a. The Provincial with his Council should foster and verify the quality of communication within the province and outside it, between confreres, with groups of the Salesian Family, with ecclesial communities and civil and social institutions, between groups of provinces and with the General Council.

b. Without detriment to what is laid down by the GC23 259, the provincial delegate for social communication, in agreement with the Provincial, will collect together a team of SDBs and qualified lay people, for the purpose of exploiting social

communication for the education and evangelization of the young and the poor. The team will draw up a provincial plan for animation, formation and consultation in the area of social communications, foreseeing suitable structures and instruments.

[137]

#### **At world level**

a. In the course of the next six years, the Rector Major with his Council will study a practical plan for the promotion, coordination and exploitation of Social Communication, as a significant field of action which has a place among the apostolic priorities of the salesian mission (C 43).

b. In the same period the Councillor General for Social Communication will offer to the provinces practical guidelines for the drawing up of a provincial plan for developing collaboration and shared responsibility between SDBs and laity in the same field.

### **4. Qualifying the formation**

[138]

The participation of the laity in the salesian spirit and mission constitutes for the SDB community a challenge which must be met by an adequate formation to the new requirements.

Such formation implies in the first place that the community be aware of the new aspects of the relationship between SDBs and lay people, and take steps to give effect to it in a process of mutual enrichment which renders communion visible and makes educative and pastoral work more efficacious.

The culture of participation and sharing involves a valid formation together. The formation processes, which see SDBs and lay people simultaneously givers and receivers, will be the more efficacious the clearer is the vocational identity of each, and the greater the understanding, respect for and exploitation of the different vocations.

The formation aims at rendering the individuals capable of living at the present day the experience of their own life with maturity and joy, of fulfilling the educative mission with professional competence, of becoming educators and pastors, and of being solidly animators of numerous apostolic forces.

#### **4.1 Objective**

[139]

**To plan processes of qualified formation so as to realize the common educative and pastoral mission**

#### **4.2 Guidelines**

[140]

##### **Ongoing formation carried out together**

Ongoing formation should be thought of as a process of giving and receiving, with the following precise objectives in view:

a. *To render the SDBs and laity capable of:*

- a renewed understanding of their own vocational identity and their specific roles;
- understanding and living salesian spirituality, which is the grace of unity and synthesis between consecration and the lay state, faith and life, religious option and educative commitment;
- being protagonists in the mission and agents of cultural change;
- updating qualifications so as to react positively to new cultural situations and new educative challenges;
- animating a wide educative setting, accompanying groups and orienting individuals to become integrated into contexts;

b. *to throw light on the values of the lay state as a vocational setting, in reciprocal relationship with the other ecclesial vocations, and with particular attention to:*

- the family vocation and the educative and formative responsibilities of parents;
- the cultural, social, political and economic context on which the laity live and work;
- the values of femininity which confer a novelty and a stimulus to deeper study on the mission to the young and on salesian spirituality

This formation continues even when lay people leave our works; as past-pupils or past-collaborators we still accompany them so that they may take into the Church and their local areas the mission and spirit of Don Bosco.

[141]

### **Towards vocational discernment**

The culminating point of the journey of faith is the vocational choice. This requires help and friendship in the individual spiritual guidance of both young people and adults. For this reason the local SDB community, the privileged setting for the suggesting and follow-up of vocations, is open to forms of welcoming young people and the promoting of experiences of the volunteer movement and of educative and pastoral service, which can lead to significant vocational options in lay life, the ordained ministry or in consecrated life.

[142]

### **With a precise process of initial formation**

The processes of discernment and initial formation must bring to maturity the conviction that to be an SDB at the present day means entering a Family, becoming part of a vast Movement, in which lay people play an active part, both in participation in the salesian spirit and in the sharing of educative and pastoral work, and also in shared responsibility in view of the mission.

Keeping in mind the different nature of the SDBs and the laity, and the times needed for human, affective and apostolic maturing, the stages of initial formation should have contents and experiences of reciprocal and complementary formation for the common growth.

[143]

### **Vocational promotion in the Salesian Family**

The common vocation unites the Salesian Family in a spiritual relationship. Every group is enriched through the mutual exchange of the different ways of living the same charism, and brings to the Salesian Family its original contribution. The awareness of its own particular call, with all that this implies and the prompt and joyful response to it, helps in sharing the ideals themselves of the salesian charism.

With joy we pass them on to others, thus providing vocational guidance at the same time.

## **4.3 Practical commitments**

[144]

### **At local level**

Every SDB community should make of the CEP the primary setting for the formation of SDBs and laity together:

- by promoting in dialogue and shared responsibility with the lay members of the CEP a programme of combined formation. Such a programme should foresee study sessions, times of prayer, moments of relaxation, the drawing up of aides, practical experience, and even a practical and formative methodology;

- by qualifying the process of elaboration of the PEPS as a practical instrument for reciprocal formation. This project should be verified each year, assessing the quality of the response given to the needs of those for whom we are working and the realization of communion and of shared responsibility in the educative and pastoral area;

- by fostering, through attentive communication, professional, educative, pastoral and salesian updating, applying for the purpose such measures and adaptations as may be necessary and opportune.

[145]

### **At provincial level**

Using the service of a group formed of lay persons and SDBs, who are committed and experts in information, youth pastoral work, the Salesian Family and social communication, each province shall review and revise the Lay Project called for by the GC23, and complete it with a programme for formation of SDBs and laity together, not later than the next Provincial Chapter. Such a programme should provide:

- contents, experiences and periods dedicated to formation;

- definitions of roles, relationships and manner of collaboration between SDBs and laity;

- coordination between the various sectors and structures of animation;

- the role and interventions of the Provincial and members of the provincial council in formation activities;

- the availability of centres, groups and structures of provincial animation.

The SDBs must retain their specific commitment, which is also a priority and a privilege, of responding positively to the demand for and the right to formation and animation which reach them from the lay members of the Salesian Family, so that such members may become in due course animators and formative agents, in their families, in their environments and places of work, in the ecclesial community and in society.

[146]

During the next six years, each Province should:

- invite the members of the Salesian Family to make a responsible commitment to a unified pastoral work for vocations, with special attention to vocational guidance and the putting forward of the various forms of Christian vocation (lay, ordained ministry, consecrated life), and specifically those of the Salesian Family;

- continue its efforts for the setting up of centres of the Cooperators and Past-pupils. For this purpose careful preparation and formation should be given to the Delegates and Assistants of the various groups of the Salesian Family;
- offer provincial and local programmes of formation, together with opportune accompaniment, also to past-pupils and other lay people who, outside our own environments, want to live and work according to the spirit of Don Bosco.

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**At world level**

The Councillor General for Formation will instigate a revision of the *Ratio in line with the directives of the GC24. In particular he will take care that in initial formation:*

- there are presented the contents and values of the lay state; that young confreres are enabled to grow and mature together, and acquire the ability to be formative agents and animators of the laity, so as to promote lay vocations;
- there are presented, not only as a matter of information but also as something vital and of experience. a knowledge of and encounter with various groups of the Salesian Family, and in particular the Cooperators, the DBV and the Past-pupils;
- that the *Common Identity Card of the Salesian Family*, the Constitutions of the FMA and the DBV, and the *Statute of the Past-pupils*, be diffused and made known;
- particular attention be given to the affective maturity required for collaboration with the lay people and with the world of women.

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The General Council will promote and sustain, through the UPS and other Salesian Universities or Centres of Spirituality, studies, experiences and courses for the formation of formation guides, in which SDBs and laity will be formed together, (without contravening the norms of the CIC or of the Holy See).

Particular attention must be given to the spirituality of St Francis de Sales and to the preventive system of Don Bosco.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL COMMUNITY

#### **1. The consecrated community the soul of the CEP**

[149]

The green Pinar di St. Antonio meadow is an indication of the infinite youthful horizon. The heart of Don Bosco envisaged the poor and abandoned youngsters as the future of humanity and the hope of the Church.

To this meadow, thronged with youngsters, Don Bosco called the greatest possible number of persons, ecclesiastics and lay people, young and adult, men and women, to stay with him.

Staying with Don Bosco meant staying with the youngsters and offering them all that we are: heart, mind and will; friendship, professional approach and presence; sympathy, service, self-donation. But from some Don Bosco asked still more than this. He asked them to stay with him always, to commit themselves full-time to the young with all their very existence and to dedicate their life by vow to following the obedient, poor and chaste Christ, in a faithful service to God and youth. They are the Salesians SDB.

[150]

Don Bosco wanted consecrated persons at the centre of his work, persons oriented to the young and their holiness.

He wanted his religious to be a precise point of reference for his charism: with their total dedication he could give the solidity and apostolic thrust needed for the continuity and worldwide extension of the mission.

The consecrated Salesian, to respond to the great love of God, perceived as a love of predilection, becomes its bearer to the young, especially the poorer ones among them (cf.C 2); he becomes the Don Bosco of the present day who can say in all truth: "For you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life" (C 14).

The religious manifests "with respectful sensitivity and missionary boldness that faith in Jesus Christ enlightens the whole enterprise of education, never disparaging human values but rather confirming and elevating them" (VC 97).

#### **1.1 Prophecy in action**

[151]

It is not only what they do but what they are that qualifies religious. "They bear witness to these marvels not so much in words as by the eloquent language of a transfigured life, capable of amazing the world" (VC 20).

The Salesian SDB, by his very life, translates the Gospel into language accessible especially to the young: through the values of consecration he raises questions and indicates possibilities of sense; through his dedication he proclaims that the secret of happiness is to lose his life so as to find it again; through his style of life he makes attractive the spirit of the beatitudes and proclaims the joy of the Resurrection; through his living in community he becomes an image of the Church, the sacrament of the Kingdom.

He lives in a way that makes it clear that youngsters and laity who share responsibility become identified not so much with him as with the vocation he lives as a member of the community, which is the bearer of the charism and salesian spirituality and this in turn is the nucleus of the CEP.

#### **1.2 Evangelical radicality**

[152]

Consecrated life starts from a deep experience of God (cf.VC 73), which calls for a fidelity similar to that of Christ and is reflected as a school of holiness. This attitude is translated in the CEP and amongst the young as a capacity for listening, respect and admiration.

"Within the Church consecrated persons have a specific duty. They are called to bring to bear on the world of education their radical witness to the values of the Kingdom" (VC 96).

"The consecrated life truly constitutes a living memorial of Jesus' way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren" (VC 22).

The profession of the Evangelical Counsels, as well as being an expression of the following of Christ, has also a pedagogical content of human growth and is a paradigm of the new humanity.

*\* Through obedience the religious makes himself available full-time for God's educative project and expresses a process of growth among the young and in the CEP;*

- he does not ascribe absolute value to his own will, but rather submits to other values perceived as of greater worth: the community, the Church, society;
- he seeks always the will of God in the signs of the times and in circumstances, to indicate it to his confreres;
- he is docile to the Spirit and makes known to the young and to the CEP "the secret unfolding of history" (VC 96);
- it disposes him for planning (PEPS) and for working with others.

*\* Chastity is the specific witness which proclaims and educates to love, in a society threatened by sexual consumerism, in which fidelity in family relationships and bonds of friendship are fragile, where love is often lived only as personal satisfaction, and where the free giving up of one's own life for others becomes ever less intelligible.*

Chastity lived as an evangelical dynamism marks out a process for the growth of human and Christian values: balance, self-control, freedom, joy, maturity, and a valuable stimulus for education to the chastity proper to other states of life (cf.VC 88)

*\* Poverty is before all else an imitation of the radical choices of Christ. For this reason the consecrated person:*

- tends towards the outcasts, the poor, the working classes, the young;
- lives with them the same precarious existence, not taking refuge in the security of structures, of a regular stipend, of power and dominion;
- bases his security solely on God's sufficiency, the true riches of the human heart (cf.VC 90);
- as animator and educator in the CEP, he applies this dynamism so that justice, solidarity and charity may triumph, that solutions may be found to the hunger and sufferings of the poor, and that activities and the organization of volunteer work may be developed (cf.VC 89. 27).

### 1.3 Community of consecrated persons

[153]

The Salesians live these great values in community, thus making visible the mystery of communion which constitutes the intimate nature of the Church and becomes leaven for the Kingdom. Because of its value as a sign and instrument the consecrated community fulfils a valuable function with respect to the CEP; it helps it to become itself an authentic experience of Church in fraternal communion and in the service of the young.

### 1.4 The lay component in the SDB community

[154]

Within the religious community we find the figure of the salesian brother, "the genial creation of the great heart of Don Bosco" (Don Rinaldi). He combines in himself the gifts of consecration with those of the lay state. To his consecrated brethren he recalls the values of the creation and of secular realities; to the laity he recalls the values of total dedication to God for the cause of the Kingdom. To all he offers a particular sensitivity for the world of work, attention to the local environment, and the demands of the professional approach associated with his educative and pastoral activity.

*From the SDB community to the CEP*

[155]

Don Bosco was led by God to form a community of consecrated persons which would be a leaven for a multiplicity of services, the spiritual animation of those who wanted to dedicate themselves to education, and a guarantee of continuity in the mission to the young. But right from the outset Don Bosco had brought in lay people who had contributed to the definition of the project, enriched its educative efficacy and spread the charism.

In this way there came into being what we now call the CEP, of which the consecrated community is the animating nucleus.

## 2. The CEP: its nature and functions

[156]

In accordance with the indications of C 47, in all its works the salesian community sets up the Educative and Pastoral Community. This is:

- a *community*:

because it involves in a family atmosphere young and adults, parents and educators, so as to become an experience of Church;

- *educative*:

because it helps to mature the potentialities of the young in every aspect: cultural, professional and social;

- *pastoral*:

because it accompanies the young as they go to meet Christ, and in the building of the Church and the Kingdom.

[157]

The components of the CEP are: the salesian community, the youngsters, their parents, lay people under various headings such as collaborators and sharers of responsibility, among whom are in the first place the members of the Salesian Family. The CEP attains goals and strategies in the educative and pastoral project, for the identity of which the province is responsible.

It has need of organisms and orientations which foster communion and the participation of all its members: councils, assemblies, organs of communication and methods of programming (decision-making, execution, verification).

## 2.1 Animation

[158]

To animate the CEP in line with the spirit and mission of Don Bosco, there are tasks to be carried out at different levels:

- organization,
- coordination,
- methodological accompaniment,
- educative orientation in objectives and content,
- spiritual and Christian formation,
- guarantee of salesian originality.

All these tasks are necessary and they are interconnected; some indeed are decisive for the animation of the CEP. Team-work, with the distribution of assignments and responsibilities guarantees practical convergence.

[159]

### *Animating duty of the salesian community in the CEP*

The salesian community is a 'charismatic community', which means that it is alive and that it guards, deepens and constantly develops Don Bosco's charism (cf. MR 11).

It carries out a specific animating activity with regard to the CEP, in a unified manner and with reference to the more decisive levels of animation. Every SDB is an animator, and strives always to fulfil the task more efficiently. This is what is meant by the expression 'animating nucleus' of the CEP, attributed to the salesian community by R 5.

In particular his special duty consists in:

- testifying to the primacy of God and total dedication to education and evangelization through the vocational figures of the salesian priest and the salesian brother;
- guaranteeing the charismatic identity;
- being the centre of communion and participation;
- prompting, urging and calling on the laity to share in Don Bosco's spirit and mission;
- promoting spiritual, salesian and vocational formation.

## 2.2 The council of the CEP and the council of the work

[160]

### **Animators of the CEP: Salesians and laity together**

The SDB community, aware of its specific responsibility, calls lay people to the CEP.

In it all then become animators, albeit in a diversity of relationships, and hence it is necessary that lay people and Salesians together plan, activate and verify the PEPS, and undergo a common formation. To this end there is need of an organism which we shall call the Council of the CEP or Council of the Work, composed of Salesians and lay people, who act as a group in animating and sharing responsibility.

[161]

### **Council of the CEP**

Within complex works which have several sectors of activity (parish, school, university hostel, youngsters in difficulties), there can exist several CEPs or one alone. If there is just one CEP, there will be only one CEP Council, which coincides with the Council of the Work. If on the other hand there are as many CEPs as there are sectors of the work, each will have its own council, and the Council of the Work will be made up of representatives of the CEP Councils.

Within the CEP Council and the Council of the Work, the SDB Rector has a specific task which must be precisely defined.

## 3. Convoking of the laity

[162]

### **Motivations**

In the past the various tasks of animation of the CEP were assumed almost exclusively by the salesian community. Today the latter must call lay people to fill roles of animation and responsibility.

Choice on the part of the SDBs is determined by various motives:

- *anthropological: in so far as education is a secular action, shared in also by those who have different religious terms of reference;*
- *ecclesiological: in so far as all the baptized are called upon to take up the evangelizing mission of the Church;*
- *charismatic: to the extent that the laity express better the secular dimension of Don Bosco's mission, thus enriching the educative and pastoral plan;*
- *professional, educative and pastoral: since numerous lay people have qualifications and ability at professional, educative and pastoral level.*

[163]

### **Types and categories**

Lay people who come into contact with us and who, for widely differing reasons, become associated with our educative and evangelizing mission, present a varied reality:

- according to the settings in which they work (Oratories and youth centres, Schools, Parishes, Missions, Social works);
- according to the roles they play (animators, catechists, teachers, directive and auxiliary personnel, coaches in sport, parents, volunteers and others);
- according to their degree of attachment, commitment, involvement and responsibility in the same mission.

To foster the process of communion and sharing in Don Bosco's spirit and mission, which happens in very diverse contexts and situations, the GC24 indicates some criteria concerning fundamental aspects for the salesian mission and the main requirements for those involved in it or who want to become so involved.

[164]

### **Criteria**

The human, social, cultural and religious values for the realization of Don Bosco's programme, "good Christians, upright citizens", must be lived by the lay educators themselves if they are to put them in credible fashion to the young.

These values form the frame of reference of the criteria here indicated.

### **Basic criteria**

The principal basic requisites asked of the lay person coming to the salesian mission, in line with each one's possibilities, are concerned with an evaluation of his sensitivity and ability to become inserted in the mission. Among the more significant traits we may list:

- personal coherence, so as to become an educative point of reference for the young, especially in the values of their lay life;
- an educative attitude and sensitivity to the youth condition, especially of those who are poor;
- empathy for Don Bosco and for his method of education;
- openness to the transcendent and respect for religious and cultural diversity.

### **Criteria of growth**

The progressive involvement and assuming of responsibility call for the gradual growth of the lay educator in the areas indicated by the 'oratorian criterion' (cf.C 40).

These concern:

- human maturity: affective balance, educative rapport in family style, ability to live and work with others, strong ethical leanings, sensitivity to social values, readiness for ongoing formation;
- educative competence: positive vocational motivation, adequate professional preparation, cordial openness to other people and especially to the young, pastoral sensitivity, adaptable to our style of animation;
- salesian identity: priority of attention to needy youth, progressive knowledge and practice of the preventive system, concrete presence in the midst of the young, willingness to live the local project;
- Christian witness: coherence of faith, participation in ecclesial life, respect for the values of other religions and cultures.

[165]

### **Manner of realization**

The diversity of contexts and situations in which SDBs and laity are working demands that it be left to the individual Provinces to adapt these criteria and spell out further their content and manner of application.

In any event it is quite certain that to foster formative processes attention must be given to three points:

\* the creation of an environment which:

- puts the person at the centre, gives due value to his specific qualities, fosters the spirit of sharing, and educates to the ability to work with others;
- lives and manifests the 'oratorian heart' of Don Bosco;
- educates to justice and legality, drawing inspiration from the Church's social teaching;

\* the *making of a plan* which:

- involves in the sharing of Don Bosco's spirit and mission everyone who approaches him. This requires:
  - the nearness and joyful testimony of the salesian community;

- the provision of opportunities for participation and the sharing of responsibility;
- careful selection of educators on the part of the local directive team with, other things being equal, preference for laity belonging to the Salesian Family.

\* *attention to a follow-up which:*

- helps the subject to deepen and share the vocational motivations of life and work, especially in times of trial;
- involves him fully in the educative and pastoral community (CEP), through processes of combined formation;
- makes him an active element for the linkage between the salesian work and the local area;
- leads him to a living knowledge of the different vocations in the Salesian Family (cf.C 47).

[166]

#### **4. Feminine presence in the CEP**

The presence of the woman in our works is an accepted fact, as regards both those for whom we work and those who share with us the responsibility for education.

To this fact two other elements must be added:

- the importance the feminine presence is acquiring in our culture;
- the commitment required by coeducation for offering both male and female models for identification.

On the other hand, we feel the importance of remaining faithful to Don Bosco's option, which was decisively oriented to boys and young men.

### **3. Guidelines**

#### **3.1 With reference to the consecrated communities**

[167]

The salesian community should:

- *frequently verify the incidence of its consecrated and communal life as a dynamic force in the education and animation of the CEP;*
- *exploit occasions for presenting and explaining to lay people and youngsters the specific aspect of consecrated life in respect of its educative importance;*
- *offer possibilities and experiences for others, and especially young people, to share the life and prayer of the community.*

*In the various phases of initial formation the young SDBs should be helped to deepen the identity of their consecration and to develop solid convictions about the educative value of consecration itself.*

[168]

*In the CEP the Rector should always be effectively present; with the consecrated community he constitutes its animating nucleus. To the consecrated members should be assigned those roles most in keeping with their educative and pastoral identity.*

#### **3.2 With reference to the CEP**

[169]

##### **Practical models for the CEP**

The Provincial with his Council, keeping in mind the realities of the province and the consistency of the various educative settings, in dialogue with the local salesian community, shall:

- determine the concrete models for the realization of the CEP;
- define for each work whether there shall be a single CEP for the whole work, or a CEP for each sector;
- indicate for the various kinds of work the functions of responsibility and animation to be entrusted to lay people.

In all this the Provincial and the local community must be careful to safeguard the unity of the salesian project in the area and in the local Church.

[170]

##### **Verification of the functioning of the CEP**

Every local community, in continuity with the deliberations of the GC23 (cf.nn.232-238) must verify the functioning of the CEP.

In this task it should be supported by the Provincial with the collaboration of the provincial organisms of animation. The Rector Major, through his teaching and the help of the competent Departments shall foster the deepening of this verification and stimulate it.

[171]

##### **The Council of the CEP and/or Council of the Work**

The SDB community should set up or consolidate the Council of the CEP and/or The Council of the Work, as the central organism which animates and coordinates the whole salesian enterprise, through reflection, dialogue, and the programming and revision of the educative and pastoral activity.

These Councils should be made up of those SDBs and lay persons who have roles of responsibility in the CEP, in line with the criteria defined at provincial level.

For the Council of the CEP or the Council of the Work, the Provincial with his Council shall:

- determine the criteria of composition,
- define the competences,
- establish the levels of shared responsibility and the areas of decision,
- indicate the method of the necessary linkage with the local council of the salesian community.

[172]

#### **The Rector in the CEP**

The Rector, as the one with primary responsibility for the apostolic activity and the administration of the goods of the community (cf.C 176), has also the primary responsibility for the CEP: in it the final word, after patient research, will belong to him (GC21 68), always in dialogue with his council.

When the work has a single CEP, the Rector presides over the Council of the CEP. When there are more than one CEP, the Rector is a member by right of the Council of each of them and presides over the Council of the Work.

In the CEP, the Rector in particular:

- animates the animators and is at the service of unity;
- fosters the charismatic character of the PEPS, in dialogue with the Provincial and in harmony with the provincial project;
- promotes formative and relational processes;
- activates the criteria for the convoking and formation of the lay people indicated by the province;
- maintains the linkage between the Council of the salesian community and the Council of the CEP (or Council of the Work).

[173]

#### **Quantitative consistency of the salesian community**

To carry out its role of animation, the salesian community needs a quantitative and qualitative consistency which helps to make its activity visible and significant.

Numerical consistency is better for sustaining formation, spiritual and fraternal life-comparisons and pastoral quality, planning and dialogue with the area and the local Church.

Following the indications of R 20 and R 150, we undertake to give greater numerical consistency to the salesian communities. This means reducing or overcoming the dispersion of the confreres who work individually in activities or works, as also redimensioning the salesian presence in an area in line with the criteria indicated by the Constitutions (art.6) and Regulations (art.1).

[174]

#### **Qualitative consistency of the salesian community**

Qualitative consistency means that in the community there must be confreres able to remain present among the young, accompany them and educate them to the faith; capable also of animating individuals and groups, of formation of lay persons, of giving attention to the neighbourhood and the local Church and to the Salesian Family and Movement.

In the next six years the qualification of the SDBs in these matters must be attended to, with educative, relational and pastoral ability receiving preference over administrative, bureaucratic and organizational skills.

The significant and complementary presence of salesian priests and brothers in the community should be guaranteed as an essential trait of its physiognomy and apostolic completeness (C 45).

### 3.3 With reference to the bringing in of lay people

[175]

Every province must see to it that the basic and growth criteria indicated above are integrated into its "Lay Project".

Contracts with public or private entities are to be drawn up by the Province in dialogue with the local community.

[176]

The local community shall clearly define:

- the role to be filled by the lay person,
- the duration of his engagement,
- the period of trial,
- the process of formation.

### 3.4 With reference to female presence in the CEP

[177]

Collaboration with youngsters' families should be intensified, since parents are the primary educators of their sons and daughters. To this end they should be offered in our works an educative climate rich in family values, and in particular an educational team with a harmonious integration of men and women components.

[178]

In this context one must emphasize the significance and prophetic force of the Salesian (SDB): not only does he play his part in education with his male values but, by living his celibacy with joy and fidelity, he bears witness to a particular quality of love and fatherliness.

For this reason, from the first years of formation confreres should be helped to develop a serious and mature attitude with regard to the opposite sex.

To build a healthy and balanced environment of coeducation care should be given to the affective and relational formation of both the SDBs and the lay members of the CEP.

[179]

Without detriment to the requirements of different contexts, the need should be emphasized to overcome an artificial parallelism of tasks in which the education of boys is entrusted to men and that of girls to women.

It is urgently necessary that at provincial level and in the local CEP a serious reflection be made:

- on the values and possibilities of coeducation;
- on how to live the preventive system in a coeducational environment;
- on how to foster sexual identification in the integral development of the individual and education to love.

In the context of coeducation, the province should aim at a healthy balance of boys and girls among those for whom we work, as well as among our collaborators (cf.R 3).

## CHAPTER 3

### SOME PARTICULAR NEW SITUATIONS

#### **1. Activities and works managed by lay people within the salesian provincial project**

An analysis of the situation shows that in some contexts there are works or activities entrusted by the SDBs to lay people, and also activities and works started up by the laity and subsequently recognized in the provincial project.

##### **1.1 Fundamental criteria**

[180]

For an activity or work managed by lay people to be considered as forming part of the project of a Province, there must be realized in it the criteria of identity, communion and significance of salesian activity and must be given effect under the responsibility of the Provincial and his Council (cf. VC 56).

##### **a. Criteria of salesian identity**

The criteria for the salesian identity of works and activities, given in the SDB Constitutions and Regulations, ensure the realization of salesian objectives and refer to the CEP, the PEPS and those to whom our mission is directed. The same criteria are valid also for works and activities managed by lay people within the provincial project.

\* With reference to the *Educative and Pastoral Community*:

The work gives effect to the CEP, involving in a family atmosphere young people and adults, parents and educators (cf. C 47):

- it has a group of animators and of those who take responsibility for it;
- it takes part in the life and initiatives of the provincial community;
- it has a lay director who is, if possible, a member of the Salesian Family.

\* With reference to the *Educative and Pastoral Project*:

The CEP draws up and realizes the local PEPS according to the guidelines of the provincial project:

- it takes its inspiration from the preventive system;
- it fosters the integral advancement of the young person; it promotes his education and culture; it proposes a journey of faith based on a meeting with Christ, ecclesial experience and sacramental life; it helps the young person to discover his own vocation; it gives attention to the formation of groups and to the growth of group activity;
- it emphasizes criteria proper to salesian activity: oratorian heart, various processes, personalized follow-up, a spirit of initiative and creativity, youth protagonism.

\* with reference to *those towards whom our work is directed*:

- the work is directed to the young and especially to the poorest of them, to the working classes, and to people not yet evangelized;
- it takes place preferably in places of the greatest poverty, and is committed to collaboration with the forces of the area and of the local Church (cf. R 18-19).

##### **b. Criteria of communion:**

- *Vocational communion: in the educative and pastoral community there is a plurality and variety of vocations, which manifests and realizes an 'experience of Church' (cf. C 47). In it is always to be preferred the presence of SDBs, because of their specific vocational and charismatic contribution.*

- *Provincial communion: works or activities managed by lay people, within a provincial project, should seek forms of communion and of sharing Don Bosco's charism; they should become integrated into the provincial community and create the conditions needed for the maturing of vocational choices for the Church and the Salesian Family.*

##### **c. Criterion of significance**

*The significance of a provincial project depends on the resources of the SDBs and laity placed at the service of animation of activities and works.*

The provincial project must in the first place guarantee the charismatic identity, evangelizing efficacy, educative quality, and ability for fostering vocations in all the activities and works.

The province must be able to offer to the laity responsible for such activities a strong charismatic accompaniment; in fact, in the presence of lay people with a clear Christian and salesian identity, the form of provincial accompaniment must be equally positive, so as not to leave without corresponding support the already existing availability.

## **1.2 Guidelines**

### **1.2.1 Responsibility of the Province**

[181]

It is the Provincial with his Council who decides whether or not to accept into the provincial project and under provincial responsibility educative works or activities which came into being autonomously and are managed by lay people. It also belongs to the Provincial with his Council to decide whether to entrust to lay management any works or activities; the latter will remain within the provincial project and responsibility.

Activities or works of the laity accepted within the provincial project.

There are works and activities belonging to lay members of the Salesian Family or Movement which realize Don Bosco's mission. The SDBs must foster the full autonomy and responsibility of the laity in such realizations; in fact it would normally be neither useful nor possible to take them into its own project and responsibility.

But if in particular situations an activity or work belonging to lay people of the Salesian Family or Movement should ask to become part of a provincial project, after an evaluation by the province of its own forces and of the possibility of realizing in the new work the criteria of salesian identity, communion and significance, it can be accepted by the Provincial with his Council.

*Activities or works entrusted to the laity within the provincial project.*

The Province has the responsibility for ensuring the salesian identity of works and activities managed by the laity within its own project. For this reason:

- it offers interventions of animation and government, by analogy with what happens in those CEPs which have the presence of the salesian community, such as the provincial visitation, verification of the local project, the linkage between the lay director of the work and the Provincial, the periodic participation of a delegate of the Provincial in the Council of the CEP;
- it promotes the constitution of the CEP Council;
- it organizes together with the laity a serious process of formation to the salesian identity;
- it follows up the lay people who have roles of animation and responsibility in the CEP;
- it establishes a stable linkage with a neighbouring salesian community or with the provincial centre of animation, especially as regards charismatic and ministerial aspects;
- if there is question of closing a work, it will first verify the possibility of entrusting it to lay management, conveniently locating it within the provincial project.

### **1.2.2 Responsibility of lay persons**

[182]

*Statutes*

Since contexts and civil legislation vary so much, every Province must define the models of management for different kinds of works entrusted to the laity within a provincial project, with particular reference to tasks of responsibility, to nominations, duration in office, decision-making organs, and the competence of the Provincial. For this purpose the Province will propose regulations or statutes for the activity or works concerned.

*Contracts*

Situations exist in which a Province entrusts to a juridical entity (association, society, or cooperative) a work or sector of a work, together with the use of furniture etc. belonging to the province. In this case a contract is necessary to regulate juridical and financial relations.

## **2. Lay collaborators in plurireligious and pluricultural contexts**

### **2.1 Ecclesial references**

[183]

There is a fundamental unity between all human beings, in so far as they have God as their origin and the fullness of life in God as their destiny (NA 2; DA 28). There is also a single history of salvation for the whole human race (Gen 1-11; DA

19,28) with at its centre Christ Jesus, who in his incarnation "in a certain way united himself with each individual" (GS 22; RH 13).

The presence and activity of the Word and of the Spirit, even beyond the confines of the Church (AG 4; RH 6; DV 53; DA 26), give origin to positive values and elements of grace also in the various religious traditions (NA 2; AG 11; LG 17; DA 30). This does not imply that everything is good in these religions. Because of the consequences of sin, truth and error, good and evil, cannot always be clearly distinguished. This requires careful discernment (DA 31).

The fundamental unity of all human beings, the positive values and elements of grace present in the traditional religions, encourage the Church to enter into "dialogue and collaboration" with them (NA 2; GS 92-93).

Faith in Christ and baptism, the sacrament of unity, are in Christians of other denominations the foundation of a communion, albeit imperfect, with the Catholic Church, and this communion makes possible a deeper dialogue.

Dialogue is of various kinds:

- the dialogue of life, which requires hospitality, respect and a genuine interest for everyone, sharing their hopes, joys, sufferings and difficulties;
- the dialogue of action, which aims at common commitment for the cause of development, justice and peace;
- the dialogue of theological exchange, which calls for mutual understanding and the promotion of values present in other religions;
- the dialogue of religious experience, which implies the sharing of prayer experiences, of the *Lectio Divina*, of the search for God (DA 42; VC 101-102).

The Church is ready for dialogue and collaboration with everyone: with Christians of other denominations, with members of other religious traditions, with persons who respect human values, and even with those who are opposed to the Church and persecute it (GS 92).

In this way the Church, while avoiding the dangers of syncretism and without failing in the duty of evangelizing and proclaiming the Good News, tries to collaborate with all for the building of God's Kingdom, definitively inaugurated by Jesus Christ (RM 16), which is the duty of every individual, of society, and of the whole world (RM 15).

Ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue and collaboration are a serious obligation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, and this requires an adequate formation (VC 100-102).

## 2.2 Salesian references

[184]

At the beginning Don Bosco's collaborators were Catholics. But he was ready to accept the help and collaboration of others. In 1881, writing to a Jew who had expressed surprise and bewilderment at finding his name included in a list of cooperators, he said: "*It is perhaps very unusual for a Catholic priest to propose an association of charity to an Israelite! But the Lord's charity has no limits, and excludes no one on grounds of age, condition or belief...*" (Collected Letters, V n.2247).

Don Bosco's attitude fosters in us the same openness at the present day.

We can invite lay people of different beliefs to collaborate with us in an educative project applicable to different situations and cultures: *The aspect of religious transcendence, the cornerstone of Don Bosco's pedagogical method, is not only applicable to every culture but can also be profitably adapted even to non-christian religions*" (IP 11). "*There, (in territories of first evangelization), it will be possible to work efficaciously, even with lay people who do not belong to the Catholic Church, provided that there is the ability to live to the full the experience of Don Bosco and to put forward in an integral manner both his educative system and his apostolic spirit*" (Message of Pope to GC24, Oss.Rom.[Eng.edtn], 13 March '96).

For such contexts it is important that the Salesian live in fidelity to his own charism and to the evangelizing mission of the Church (C 6.7.30.31), inserting various elements into his intervention: the witness of Christian life, commitment to human advancement and social justice, prayer and contemplation, inter-religious dialogue, direct proclamation of Christ's Gospel.

## 2.3 Guidelines

[185]

From the ecclesial and salesian references we can deduce two criteria for our guidance in the delicate process of communion and sharing with lay people of other traditions and convictions.

a. The fundamental criterion is the preventive system.

With those who do not accept God we can journey together, basing ourselves on the human and lay values present in the preventive system; with those who do accept God and the transcendent we can go further, even to welcoming their religious values; and finally, with those who share our faith in Christ but not our membership of the Church, we can walk still more closely on the path of the Gospel.

b. Since the mission to youth leads to an education which is at the same time evangelization, no collaboration is possible with those who are not open to a search for God. Nevertheless they will not be excluded from our pastoral concern. This is the case especially with persons adhering to certain sects, movements or ideologies with convictions hostile to the Christian faith.

#### **2.4 Practical commitments**

[186]

a. The GC24 asks the Salesians and the CEPs for a greater awareness of the rich possibilities offered us by lay collaborators of other religions and convictions, and asks urgently for a vital and practical dialogue to be begun with them in the area of the education of the young.

b. In the next six years a deep and accurate study should be made of our rapport with them in all its breadth, having always in mind the ultimate objective of the fullness of the proclamation of Christ.

c. Their presence should be exploited in our works, meeting their desire to be recognized as valid collaborators in the salesian mission.

d. Together with them a qualified and adequate formation should be promoted on the salient aspects of the preventive system, and on the humanistic, ethical, transcendent and religious values contained in it.

e. An intelligent collaboration should be fostered with other public or private organisms which work for the benefit of the young.

## CONCLUSION

[187]

A year after his arrival at Valdocco Don Bosco had a dream, which he recounted only in 1864 to a small group of Salesians whom he called together after the 'good night'.

"I have already told you of several things I saw as in a dream. From them we can infer how much Our Lady loves and helps us. But now that we are alone together, I am going to tell you not just another dream, but something that Our Lady herself graciously showed me. I am doing this so that each of us may be convinced that it is Our Lady herself who wants our Congregation. This should spur us to work ever harder for God's greater glory. I tell you this in confidence".

And he went on to describe the famous vision of the 'Pergola of roses'.

Don Bosco was told to take off his shoes; this he did willingly, only to discover at once how many painful thorns were hidden among the flowers.

They indicate the difficulties: both internal (need for mortification!) and external (need for apostolic courage).

But he was not alone:

"Many priests, clerics and lay people whom I had asked, began to follow me quite happily, attracted by the beauty of the flowers, but when they found they had to walk on piercing thorns and that these were sticking out on all sides, they began to cry out: We have been fooled! I replied: Let those who are only out for a good time go back again; the others follow me. Quite a number did go back.(...) But I was soon consoled when I saw a group of priests, clerics and laymen coming towards me. 'Here we are', they said, 'we are all yours and ready to follow you'. So I led them forward. Many of them I knew, but many more were strangers".

The path brought them to another pleasant garden where a cool breeze cured all their injuries and led them to an imposing building where the Blessed Virgin explained the sense of the vision and encouraged her followers in their mission.

As soon as the Mother of God finished speaking, I awoke and found myself in my room" (BM 3, 25-27).

This message is addressed primarily to us SDBs; in it we find echoed with certainty the Word of God.

[188]

In response let us note the need we have to renew our faith if we want to become 'symbols', a bond of communion with our brothers and sisters scattered all over the world.

*We believe that  
guided by Mary  
and working together  
we can reach that wisdom  
which is the promise of life.*

*We believe that  
what unites  
Salesians and laity  
together  
is the cry to Don Bosco  
"We are all yours".*

*We believe that  
we can push ahead  
and call others to our side  
together  
along our way.*

*We believe that  
new times are coming  
for the Church and the world:  
with living hope  
we shall be  
together  
builders of the Kingdom.*